WIAA Mobile Region Workforce Report

Summary

- Mobile County had a 4.7 percent unemployment rate in August 2005, with about 8,540 unemployed. However, the county has a large 51,400-strong available labor pool that is looking for better jobs and includes 42,800 underemployed workers. The underemployed are willing to commute farther and longer. For the one-way commute, 55 percent are prepared for 20 or more minutes longer and 38 percent will go 20 or more extra miles.

- In 2000, 21,100 commuted into the county for work, compared to 13,200 residents who worked outside the county. About 60 percent of in-commuters came from Baldwin County and almost 40 percent of out-commuters work in Mississippi. The high level of commuting suggests that roads and highways must be maintained properly to ensure uninterrupted movement of workers and not slow economic development.

- The county's educational attainment is comparable to that for Alabama. Of the age 25 and over population, Alabama has 75 percent high school graduates and 19 percent bachelor's or higher degree holders, compared to about 77 percent and 19 percent, respectively, for the county.

- Employment is currently growing faster than the labor force and population. This can intensify commuter inflow. Workforce development initiatives that tackle this challenge might (i) focus on hard-to-serve populations (e.g. out-of-school youth and illiterate adults), (ii) help communities gain new residents, and (iii) facilitate in-commuting. Hard-to-serve populations are often outside of the mainstream economy, poor, and have difficulty finding work. They are potential labor force participants and some investment in training, transportation, child care, infrastructure, etc. may be needed to tap this resource. Increasing population is generally more beneficial to communities than in-commuting, but requires investment in amenities and infrastructure to support the growth. Facilitating in-commuting should be a short-term strategy.

- The top five employers in the county are: retail trade; health care and social assistance; educational services; manufacturing; and administrative and support and waste management and remediation services. They provided 85,569 jobs, about 53 percent of the county total in second quarter 2004. Manufacturing, educational services, and health care and social assistance all had average monthly wages that were above the $2,633 countywide average.

- On average about 9,600 jobs were created per quarter from second quarter 2001 to second quarter 2004; quarterly net job flows averaged about 500. Job creation is the number of new jobs that are created either by new area businesses or through expansion of existing firms. Net job flows reflect the difference between current and previous employment at all businesses.

- Six occupations are both high-demand and fast-growing: Home Health Aides; Counter and Rental Clerks; Security Guards; Receptionists and Information Clerks; Customer Service Representatives; and Truck Drivers, Light or Delivery Services. The top five high-demand occupations are Cashiers; Retail Salespersons; Combined Food Preparation and Serving Workers; Waiters and Waitresses; and Registered Nurses. The top five fast-growing occupations are Home Health Aides; Medical Assistants; Medical Records and Health Information Technicians; Social and Human Service Assistants; and Computer Software Engineers.

- The top 50 highest earning occupations are mainly in health, legal, management, engineering, computer, and postsecondary education fields. Of the top 10 occupations, six are health, three are management, and one is legal. Almost all high-earning occupations require bachelor's or higher degrees.

- Fast-growing or high-demand occupations are generally not high-earning. Of 34 selected high-demand, 33 selected fast-growing, and 50 selected high-earning occupations, only one high-earning occupation, General and Operations Managers, is in the high-demand category. Six occupations are both high-earning and fast-growing: Computer Software Engineers; Sales Managers; Computer and Information Systems Managers; Pharmacists; Management Analysts; and Sales Representatives, Wholesale and Manufacturing, Technical and Scientific Products.

- The most relevant skills for high-demand and fast-growing occupations are basic: active listening, reading comprehension, speaking, writing, and service orientation. High-demand and high-growth occupations are also common to the leading employment sectors. Economic development should aim to diversify and strengthen the county's economy by retaining, expanding, and attracting more high-wage providing industries.

- The finding that basic skills are important—for high-demand, fast-growing, and high-earning jobs—indicates a strong need for training in these skills. Ideally, all high school graduates should possess basic skills so that postsecondary and higher education can focus on other and more complex skills as well as enhancing these basic skills. Employers should be an integral part of planning for training as they can help identify future skill needs and any existing gaps.

- Skill and education requirements for jobs keep rising, strongly emphasizing the need to raise educational attainment in the county. Workforce and economic development should involve postsecondary and higher education institutions to address this issue. Higher incomes to graduates from these institutions would help to raise personal income for the county. Raising personal income by improving educational attainment for a county that has low population and labor force growth rates is an effective economic development strategy.

- A highly educated and productive workforce is a critical economic development asset. Together, workforce development and economic development can provide this asset and build a strong well-diversified county economy. Indeed, one cannot achieve success without the other.

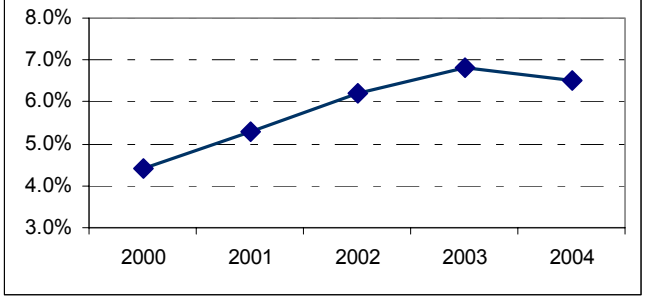
Workforce Supply

Labor Force Activity

The labor force includes all persons in the civilian noninstitutional population who are age 16 and over and who have, or are actively looking for, a job. Typically, those who have no job and are not looking for one are not included (e.g. students and retirees). Mobile County labor force information in Table M.1 shows the unemployment rate falling from 6.5 percent for 2004 to 4.7 percent in August 2005 as the number of employed residents grew much faster than the labor force.

Annual unemployment rates for 2000 to 2004 are shown in Figure M.1. The county's unemployment rose from 4.4 percent in 2000 to 6.8 percent in 2003 reflecting the effects of the last economic recession. The rate has been declining with employment gains in 2004 and 2005. Employment in the region averaged 164,000 quarterly from the second quarter of 2001 to third quarter 2004 (Figure M.2). The low point was recorded in the first quarter of 2004 but employment has been recovering with increasing economic activity. Employment refers to the number of full-time and part-time jobs.

Figure M.1 Mobile LWIA Unemployment Rate

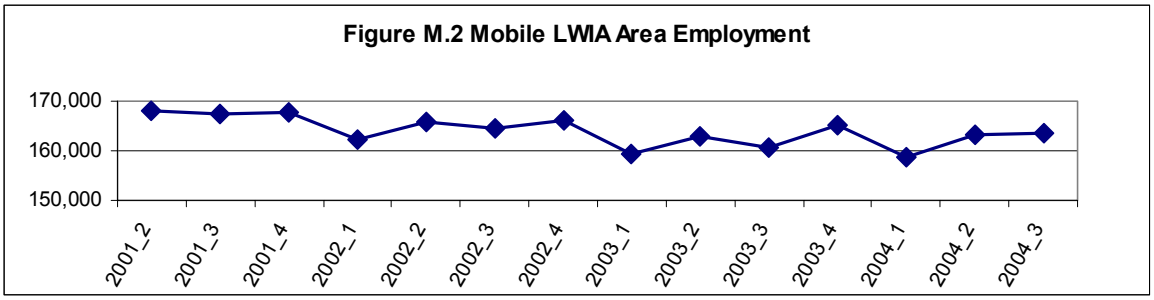


Source: Alabama Department of Industrial Relations.

Table M.1 Mobile County LWIA Labor Force Information

	2004			
	Labor Force	Employed	Unemployed	Rate
Mobile County	180,685	168,929	11,756	6.51%
Alabama	2,148,766	2,029,314	119,452	5.56%
U.S.	147,401,000	139,252,000	8,149,000	5.53%
	2005 August			
	Labor Force	Employed	Unemployed	Rate
Mobile County	182,636	174,094	8,542	4.68%
Alabama	2,155,745	2,065,528	90,217	4.18%
U.S.	150,469,000	143,142,000	7,327,000	4.87%

Source: Alabama Department of Industrial Relations and U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.



Source: Alabama Department of Industrial Relations and U.S. Census Bureau.

Commuting Patterns

In 2000, more people commuted into the county for work than commuted out (Table M.2). Net commuter inflow was about 7,900. About 60 percent of in-commuters came from Baldwin County and almost 40 percent of out-commuters work in Mississippi. Table M.2 also shows the one-way average commute time and distance for workers in 2004; the data were collected as part of a survey on underemployment. The one-way commute takes less than 20 minutes for 59 percent of residents and between 20 and 40 minutes for almost 28 percent. Roughly 8 percent take more than 40 minutes, with 3.4 percent exceeding one hour.

Table M.2 Mobile LWIA Commuting Patterns

Area	Inflow, 2000			Outflow, 2000	
	Number	Percent		Number	Percent
Mobile County	21,092	100.0		13,228	100.0

Average commute time (one-way), 2004

	Percent of workers
Less than 20 minutes	59.3
20 to 40 minutes	27.6
40 minutes to an hour	4.1
More than an hour	3.4

Average commute distance (one-way), 2004

	Percent of workers
Less than 10 miles	47.0
10 to 25 miles	33.2
25 to 45 miles	9.3
More than 45 miles	6.3

Note: Rounding errors may be present.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau and Alabama Department of Industrial Relations.

The commute is less than 10 miles for 47 percent of workers and 33 percent travel 10 to 25 miles. About 16 percent of workers travel more than 25 miles one-way, with 6.3 percent exceeding 45 miles. This commuting data suggest that roads and highways must be maintained properly to ensure uninterrupted movement of workers and not slow economic development.

Population

The Mobile County population estimate of about 400,526 for 2004 is little changed from what was recorded for 2000 (Figure M.3 and Table M.3). However, the region's population is projected to grow 4.4 percent in this decade to almost 418,000 by 2010. This low projected population growth suggests that in-commuting will be intensified if employment growth continues its fast pace. Communities should rather persuade in-commuters to become county residents. Some investment in amenities and infrastructure may be needed to attract new residents.

Figure M.3 Mobile County LWIA Population

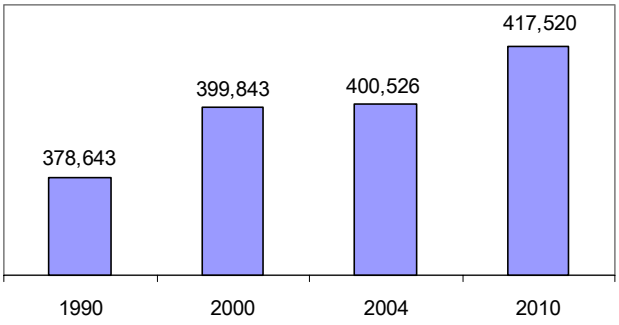


Table M.3 Mobile County LWIA Population

	1990 Census	2000 Census	2004 Estimate	% Change 2000-2004	2010 Projected	% Change 2000-2010
Mobile County LWIA	378,643	399,843	400,526	0.2	417,520	4.4
Alabama	4,040,587	4,447,100	4,530,182	1.9	4,838,812	8.8
U.S.	248,709,873	281,421,966	296,655,404	5.4	314,571,000	11.8

Source: Center for Business and Economic Research, The University of Alabama and U.S. Census Bureau.

Educational Attainment

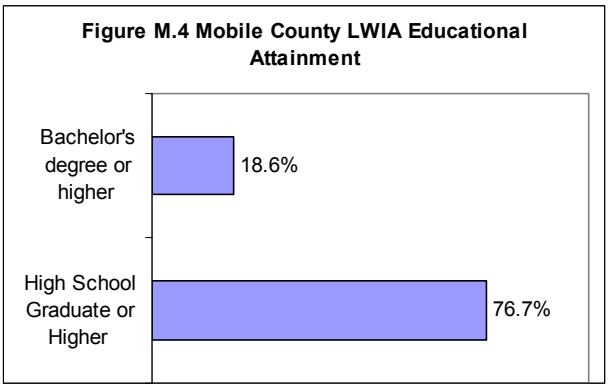
Educational attainment of Mobile County residents who are 25 years old and over is shown below in Table M.4 and Figure M.4. About 77 percent graduated from high school and nearly 19 percent hold bachelor's or higher degrees. Educational attainment is important as skills rise with education and high wage 21st century jobs demand more skill sets.

Per Capita Income

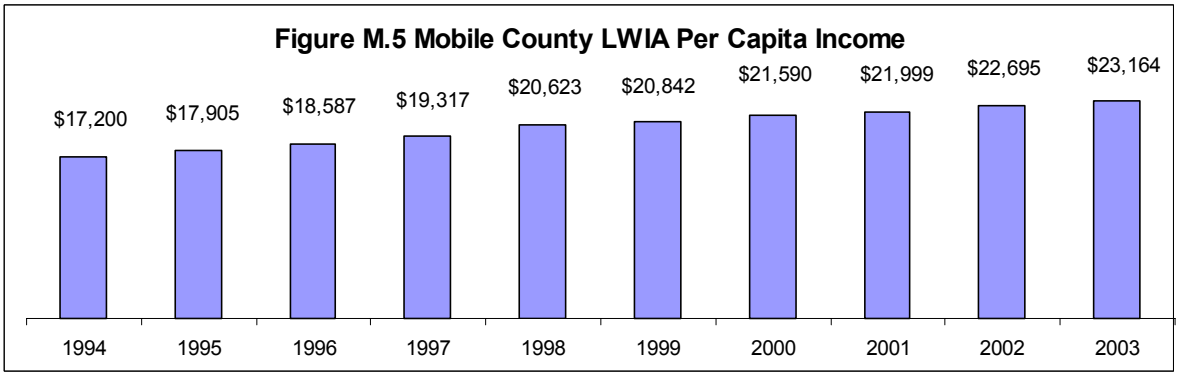
Mobile County per capita income (PCI) was at $23,164 in 2003 (Figure M.5). This PCI was up by about 35 percent from 1994. The county's 2003 PCI was also $3,342 less than Alabama's $26,505, almost 13 percent lower.

Table M.4 Educational Attainment in 2000, Population 25 Years and Over

	Mobile County LWIA
Total	250,122
No schooling completed	3,033
Nursery to 4th grade	1,564
5th and 6th grade	3,279
7th and 8th grade	8,846
9th grade	7,988
10th grade	10,421
11th grade	10,826
12th grade, no diploma	12,266
High school graduate/equivalent	79,822
Some college, less than 1yr	16,388
Some college, 1+ yrs, no degree	35,788
Associate degree	13,276
Bachelor's degree	30,499
Master's degree	10,782
Professional school degree	3,586
Doctorate degree	1,758



Source: Center for Business and Economic Research, The University of Alabama and U.S. Census Bureau.



Source: U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis and Center for Business and Economic Research, The University of Alabama.

Underemployment and Available Labor

Labor force data are often limited to information on the employed and the unemployed that is available from government sources. However, this information is not complete from the perspective of employers. New or expanding employers are also interested in underemployment because current workers are potential employees. Experience requirements, starting wages and salary ranges, and signing bonuses in job ads suggest that many prospective employers look beyond the unemployed for workers.

Workers in occupations that underutilize their experience, training, and skills are underemployed. These workers might look for other work because their current earnings are below what they believe they can get or because they wish to not be underemployed. Underemployment occurs for various reasons including (i) productivity growth, (ii) spousal employment and income, and (iii) family constraints or personal preferences. The various contributing factors combined with economic, social, and geographic characteristics of areas make underemployment unique to areas.

The existence of underemployment identifies economic potential that is not being realized. It is extremely difficult to measure this economic potential because of uncertainties regarding additional income that the underemployed can bring to an area. It is clear, however, that underemployment provides opportunities for selective job creation and economic growth. A business that needs skills prevalent among the underemployed could locate in WIAAs with such workers regardless of those areas' unemployment rates. A low unemployment rate, which may falsely suggest limited labor availability, is not a hindrance to the business.

The underemployed present a significant pool of labor because they tend to respond to job opportunities that they believe are better for reasons that include (i) higher income, (ii) better benefits, (iii) better terms and conditions of employment, and (iv) better match with skills, training, and experience. The underemployed also create opportunities for entry level workers as they leave lower-paying jobs for better-paying ones. Even if their previously held positions are lost or not filled (perhaps due to low unemployment), there is economic growth in gaining higher-paying jobs. Such income growth boosts consumption, savings, and tax collections. Quantifying the size of the underemployed is a necessary first step in exploiting it for economic development, workforce training, planning, and other uses.

The Mobile County LWIA had an underemployment rate of 24.6 percent in 2004. Applying this rate to August 2005 labor force data means that about 42,800 employed residents were underemployed (Table M.5). Adding the unemployed gives a total available labor pool of about 51,400 for the county. This pool is six times the number of unemployed and is a more realistic measure of the available labor in the county. However, prospective employers must be prepared to offer the underemployed higher wages, better benefits or terms of employment, or some other incentives to induce them to change jobs.

Table M.5 Available Labor

	Jefferson County LWIA
Labor Force	182,636
Employed	174,094
Underemployment rate	24.6%
Underemployed workers	42,827
Unemployed	8,542
Available labor pool	**51,369**

Note: Rounding errors may be present. Based on August 2005 labor force data and 2004 underemployment rates.

Source: Center for Business and Economic Research, The University of Alabama and Alabama Department of Industrial Relations.

Workforce Demand

Industry Mix

The retail trade sector was the leading employer with about 22,200 jobs in the second quarter of 2004, followed by health care and social assistance with almost 18,900 jobs (Table M.6). Rounding up the top five industries by employment are educational services, manufacturing, and administrative and support and waste management and remediation services. These five industries provided 85,569 jobs, about 53 percent of the county total.

The average monthly wage across all industries in the county was $2,633. Three of the leading employers--manufacturing, educational services, and health care and social assistance paid more than this average. Overall, the highest average monthly wages were for mining ($5,144), utilities ($4,171), and professional, scientific and technical services ($3,555). Accommodation and food services paid the least at $1,105. Mining also had the highest average monthly new hire wages with $4,564. Accommodation and food services paid the least again with $804.

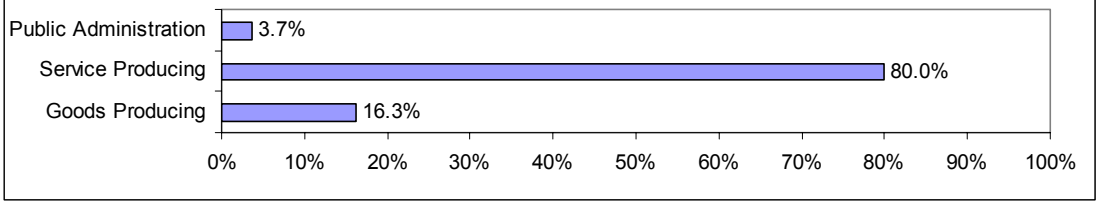
Table M.6 Industry Mix (2nd Quarter 2004)

Industry by 2-digit NAICS Code	Total Employment	Share	Rank	Average Monthly Wage	Average Monthly New Hire Earnings
11 Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	893	0.55%	18	$2,283	$1,691
21 Mining	443	0.27%	19	$5,144	$4,564
22 Utilities	1,667	1.03%	16	$4,171	$2,882
23 Construction	9,862	6.09%	7	$2,693	$1,990
31-33 Manufacturing	15,197	9.39%	4	$3,499	$2,046
42 Wholesale Trade	8,532	5.27%	9	$3,521	$2,674
44-45 Retail Trade	22,247	13.74%	1	$1,987	$1,337
48-49 Transportation and Warehousing	7,130	4.40%	10	$3,205	$2,242
51 Information	2,615	1.62%	15	$3,110	$2,199
52 Finance and Insurance	5,511	3.40%	13	$3,551	$2,862
53 Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	3,946	2.44%	14	$2,388	$1,636
54 Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	8,726	5.39%	8	$3,555	$2,556
55 Management of Companies and Enterprises	398	0.25%	20	$2,773	$1,997
56 Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services	13,419	8.29%	5	$2,044	$1,363
61 Educational Services	15,828	9.78%	3	$2,912	$1,693
62 Health Care and Social Assistance	18,878	11.66%	2	$2,819	$1,837
71 Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	1,423	0.88%	17	$1,469	$914
72 Accommodation and Food Services	13,353	8.25%	6	$1,105	$804
81 Other Services (except Public Administration)	5,814	3.59%	12	$1,927	$1,427
92 Public Administration	6,014	3.71%	11	$2,359	$1,471
ALL INDUSTRIES	161,896	100.00%		$2,633	

Source: Alabama Department of Industrial Relations and U.S. Census Bureau.

By broad industry classification, service producing industries provided 80 percent of jobs in second quarter 2004 (Figure M.6). Goods producing industries were next with about 16 percent and public administration 4 percent. This distribution is for jobs in the county.

Figure M.6 Mobile County LWIA Employment Distribution



Job Creation and Net Job Flows

On average, about 9,600 jobs were created per quarter from second quarter 2001 to second quarter 2004. Figure M.7 shows job creation on a downward trend over the period, but clearly rising in 2004. Quarterly net job flows averaged 544 in the same period (Figure M.8). Net job flows have ranged from a loss of about 2,900 to a gain of the same. Job creation refers to the number of new jobs that are created either by new area businesses or through the expansion of existing firms. Net job flows reflect the difference between current and previous employment at all businesses.

Figure M.7 Job Creation in the Mobile LWIA

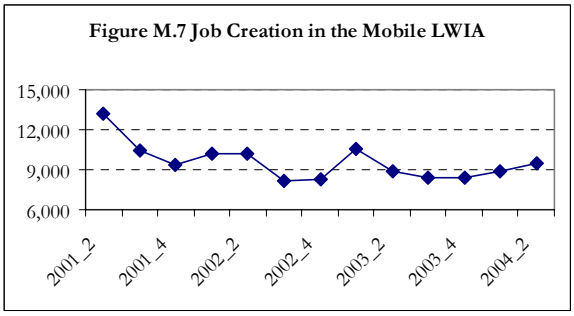
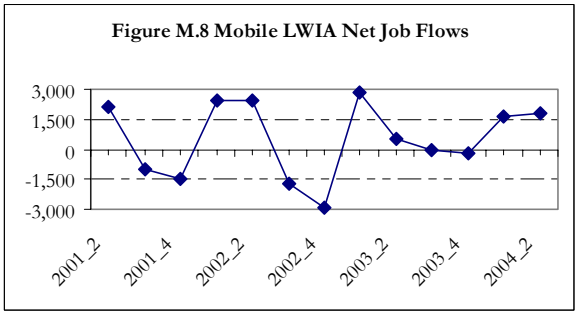


Figure M.8 Mobile LWIA Net Job Flows



Source: Alabama Department of Industrial Relations and U.S. Census Bureau.

High-Demand Occupations

Table M.7 shows the top 34 of about 490 occupations ranked by projected demand for jobs. Many of these occupations are common to the leading employment sectors identified earlier: retail trade; health care and social assistance; educational services, manufacturing, and administrative and support and waste management and remediation services. These sectors will continue to dominate employment in the county. The top five high-demand occupations are Cashiers; Retail Salespersons; Combined Food Preparation and Serving Workers; Waiters and Waitresses; and Registered Nurses.

Table M.7 Selected High-Demand Occupations (Base Year 2002 & Projected Year 2012)

Occupation	Annual Average Job Openings		
	Total	Due to Growth	Due to Separations
Cashiers	325	45	280
Retail Salespersons	280	55	225
Combined Food Preparation and Serving Workers	210	60	150
Waiters and Waitresses	195	25	170
Registered Nurses	180	90	90
General and Operations Managers	150	50	100
Office Clerks, General	150	45	105
Truck Drivers, Heavy and Tractor-Trailer	140	80	60
Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand	140	15	125
Secretaries, Except Legal, Medical, and Executive	105	15	90
Sales Representatives, Except Technical and Scientific Products	105	40	65
Janitors and Cleaners, Except Maids	100	40	60
First-Line Supervisors/Managers, Retail Sales	100	35	65
Bookkeeping, Accounting, and Auditing Clerks	95	20	75
Security Guards**	90	45	45
Customer Service Representatives**	80	45	35
Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses	75	30	45
Receptionists and Information Clerks**	70	35	35
Nursing Aides, Orderlies, and Attendants	70	35	35
Child Care Workers	70	20	50
Teacher Assistants	70	25	45
Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners	65	25	40
Elementary School Teachers, Except Special Education	60	20	40
First-Line Supervisors/Managers of Office and Administrative Support Workers	60	15	45
Welders, Cutters, Solderers, and Brazers	60	25	35
Electricians	55	30	25
Maintenance and Repair Workers, General	55	20	35
Truck Drivers, Light or Delivery Services**	55	40	15
Secondary School Teachers, Except Special Education	50	15	35
Home Health Aides**	50	40	10
Counter and Rental Clerks**	50	20	30
Accountants and Auditors	50	20	30
Carpenters	50	20	30
Automotive Service Technicians and Mechanics	50	15	35

Note: A minimum of 50 average annual job openings is used as selection criterion and data are rounded to nearest 5.

** Qualify as both high-demand and fast-growing occupations.

Source: Alabama Department of Industrial Relations.

Fast-Growing Occupations

The top 33 of occupations ranked by projected growth of employment are listed in Table M.8. The top three fast-growing occupations are in health or health support. The top five high growth occupations are Home Health Aides; Medical Assistants; Medical Records and Health Information Technicians; Social and Human Service Assistants; and Computer Software Engineers, Applications. Six occupations are both high-demand and fast-growing: Home Health Aides; Counter and Rental Clerks; Security Guards; Receptionists and Information Clerks; Customer Service Representatives; and Truck Drivers, Light or Delivery Services.

Table M.8 Selected Fast-Growing Occupations (Base Year 2002 & Projected Year 2012)

Occupation	Employment 2002	Employment 2012	Percent Change	Annual Growth (Percent)	Total Annual Average Job Openings
Home Health Aides**	850	1,250	47.1	3.93	50
Medical Assistants	270	390	44.4	3.75	15
Medical Records and Health Information Technicians	370	530	43.2	3.66	20
Social and Human Service Assistants	370	510	37.8	3.26	20
Computer Software Engineers, Applications	230	310	34.8	3.03	10
Computer Support Specialists	550	740	34.5	3.01	25
Personal and Home Care Aides	870	1,170	34.5	3.01	45
Choreographers	120	160	33.3	2.92	10
Pharmacy Technicians	280	370	32.1	2.83	15
Pharmacists	350	460	31.4	2.77	15
Aircraft Mechanics and Service Technicians	***	***	***	***	***
Heating, Air Conditioning, and Refrigeration Mechanics and Installers	710	920	29.6	2.62	30
Training and Development Specialists	240	310	29.2	2.59	10
Production, Planning, and Expediting Clerks	450	580	28.9	2.57	25
Dental Assistants	280	360	28.6	2.54	20
Human Resources Managers	210	270	28.6	2.54	10
Telecommunications Line Installers and Repairers	110	140	27.3	2.44	10
Counter and Rental Clerks**	780	990	26.9	2.41	50
Security Guards**	1,790	2,240	25.1	2.27	90
Preschool Teachers, Except Special Education	440	550	25.0	2.26	15
Maintenance Workers, Machinery	160	200	25.0	2.26	10
Public Relations Managers	240	300	25.0	2.26	10
Rehabilitation Counselors	120	150	25.0	2.26	10
Management Analysts	450	560	24.4	2.21	15
Receptionists and Information Clerks**	1,410	1,750	24.1	2.18	70
Computer and Information Systems Managers	210	260	23.8	2.16	10
Directors, Religious Activities and Education	340	420	23.5	2.14	10
Customer Service Representatives**	1,840	2,270	23.4	2.12	80
Child, Family, and School Social Workers	220	270	22.7	2.07	10
Truck Drivers, Light or Delivery Services**	1,810	2,220	22.7	2.06	55
Sales Reps., Wholesale and Manufacturing, Technical and Scientific Products	620	760	22.6	2.06	30
Human Resources Assistants, Exc. Payroll and Timekeeping	180	220	22.2	2.03	10
Sales Managers	450	550	22.2	2.03	20

Note: Selection criterion is an annual growth rate of at least 2.0 percent. Employment level data are rounded to the nearest 10 and job openings data are rounded to the nearest 5.

** Qualify as both high-demand and fast-growing occupations.

*** The data for these occupations are confidential using Bureau of Labor Statistics standards.

Source: Alabama Department of Industrial Relations.

High-Earning Occupations

Any discussion of earnings must consider that wages vary with experience. Occupations with the highest entry wages may not necessarily have the highest average or experienced wages. Table M.9 shows 50 selected highest earning occupations in the county. These occupations are mainly in health, legal, management, engineering, computer, and postsecondary education fields. Of the top 10 occupations, six are health, three are management, and one is legal. Only one high-earning occupation, General and Operations Managers, is in the high-demand category. Six occupations are both high-earning and fast-growing: Computer Software Engineers, Applications; Sales Managers; Computer and Information Systems Managers; Pharmacists; Management Analysts; and Sales Representatives, Wholesale and Manufacturing, Technical and Scientific Products.

Table M.9 Selected High-Earning Occupations

Occupation	Mean Annual Salary ($)
Surgeons	180,856
Obstetricians and Gynecologists	176,010
Internists, General	169,749
Family and General Practitioners	146,370
Pediatricians, General	144,581
Chief Executives	135,304
Dentists, General	134,410
Lawyers	106,933
Engineering Managers	96,200
Natural Sciences Managers	88,795
Personal Financial Advisors	88,046
General and Operations Managers	85,821
Pharmacists	83,075
Chiropractors	82,514
Optometrists	81,806
Computer and Information Systems Managers	81,078
Health Specialties Teachers, Postsecondary	80,930
Marketing Managers	79,435
Computer Hardware Engineers	79,414
Sales Managers	78,957
Securities, Commodities, and Financial Services Sales Agents	78,458
Environmental Engineers	76,960
Chemical Engineers	76,502
Financial Managers	76,003
Airline Pilots, Copilots, and Flight Engineers	74,870
Materials Engineers	73,382
Medical and Health Services Managers	72,925
Electrical Engineers	72,904
Purchasing Managers	72,488
Petroleum Engineers	71,906
Computer Software Engineers, Applications	71,698
Mechanical Engineers	70,221
Industrial Production Managers	69,056
Management Analysts	68,806
Veterinarians	68,619
Construction Managers	67,163
Sales Engineers	66,934
Computer Programmers	66,789
Operations Research Analysts	66,518
Physics Teachers, Postsecondary	65,710
Computer Systems Analysts	65,250
Industrial Engineers	65,125
Aerospace Engineering and Operations Technicians	65,000
Sales Representatives, Wholesale and Manufacturing, Technical and Scientific Products	64,979
Economics Teachers, Postsecondary	64,560
Commercial Pilots	64,020
Architects, Except Landscape and Naval	63,627
Health and Safety Engineers, Except Mining Safety Engineers and Inspectors	63,502
Clinical, Counseling, and School Psychologists	63,253
Civil Engineers	63,190

Note: The list of occupations is specific to the region, but earnings are statewide. Only the 50 highest earning single occupations are presented. The list does not include occupations that are affected by confidentiality. Some high-earning occupational groups are not listed because earnings can vary considerably for occupations within these groups. Employment data are rounded to the nearest 10. The data provided are based on the November 2004 release of the Occupational Employment Statistics (OES) combined employment and wage file. Estimates for specific occupations may include imputed data.

"NA" indicates data items that are not publishable or not available.

Source: Center for Business and Economic Research, The University of Alabama and Alabama Department of Industrial Relations.

Other Workforce Issues

Available Labor

Employment is a critical input to economic development. Availability of labor is thus very important. Mobile County has a large 51,400-strong available labor pool that is looking for better jobs, typically higher-wage ones. This pool includes about 42,800 underemployed workers who are willing to commute farther and longer; 55 percent are prepared for 20 or more minutes longer and 38 percent will go 20 or more extra miles.

A lack of job opportunities in their areas, low wages at available jobs, and child care and family responsibilities are the primary reasons given for being underemployed. Nonworkers cite disability and retirement as primary reasons for their status; a few also cite low wages at available jobs as a major reason. Some nonworkers may become part of the labor force if their problems can be addressed. Economic development efforts should take these factors into consideration.

Employment is growing faster than the labor force. Higher employment demand could intensify in-commuting, but also presents the county and its communities with opportunities to attract new residents. Some communities must be prepared to invest in amenities and infrastructure to support such growth because immigration is generally more beneficial to communities than in-commuting.

Immigration is one way of growing the labor force through growth in the population. The county's population growth rate is very low compared to the state's and this is expected to continue through 2010. This presents a challenge to meeting increases in demand for workers. Another strategy to expand the labor force to meet this demand is to focus on hard-to-serve populations, which include persons in poverty, those receiving welfare, those in sparsely populated areas, those on active parole, and out-of-school youth. These people are often outside of the mainstream economy and poor. They usually have difficulty finding work because they have low levels of educational attainment, lack occupational skills, or face geographic or other barriers. Some investment in training, transportation, child care, infrastructure, etc. may be needed to tap these potential workers.

Skills

Jobs require skill sets and it is necessary that jobholders have the relevant skills. High earning occupations typically require more complex skills, which are obtained in the pursuit of the high educational attainment levels that such jobs require. Low earning occupations require fewer and more basic skill sets; some such occupations have no minimum skill set requirements (e.g. dishwashers and maids). Table M.10 shows the percentage of selected occupations in Mobile County that list a particular skill as primary. We define a primary skill as one in the top 10 of the required skill set for an occupation. O*NET Online provides skill sets for all occupations ranked by the degree of importance, making primary skills more important than others. A particular skill may be more important to and more extensively used in one occupation than another. Table M.10 does not address such cross-occupational skill importance comparisons.

In general, basic skills are most frequently listed as primary. Science is primary for more selected high-earning occupations than selected fast-growing and selected high-demand occupations. A similar pattern holds for critical thinking, mathematics, complex problem solving, resource

management, and systems skills. These skills require longer training periods and postsecondary education. The county's high-demand and high-growth occupations are dominated by occupations such as Cashiers; Retail Salespersons; Combined Food Preparation and Serving Workers; Waiter and Waitresses; Home Health Aides; and Medical Assistants. The most relevant skills for such occupations are active listening, reading comprehension, speaking, writing, and service orientation.

Table M.10 Share of Selected Occupations for Which Skill Is Primary

	Selected High-Demand Occupations	Selected Fast-Growing Occupations	Selected High-Earning Occupations
Basic Skills			
Active Learning	35%	39%	66%
Active Listening	85%	79%	82%
Critical Thinking	62%	55%	94%
Learning Strategies	29%	27%	10%
Mathematics	26%	21%	42%
Monitoring	44%	30%	30%
Reading Comprehension	76%	85%	92%
Science	0%	3%	42%
Speaking	68%	76%	60%
Writing	41%	58%	40%
Complex Problem Solving Skills			
Complex Problem Solving	3%	15%	40%
Resource Management Skills			
Management of Financial Resources	3%	3%	12%
Management of Material Resources	3%	3%	2%
Management of Personnel Resources	9%	3%	10%
Time Management	50%	52%	42%
Social Skills			
Coordination	26%	24%	32%
Instructing	35%	39%	22%
Negotiation	6%	6%	14%
Persuasion	6%	6%	14%
Service Orientation	35%	36%	14%
Social Perceptiveness	47%	48%	12%
Systems Skills			
Judgment and Decision Making	24%	24%	70%
Systems Analysis	0%	6%	12%
Systems Evaluation	3%	6%	26%
Technical Skills			
Equipment Maintenance	12%	12%	2%
Equipment Selection	15%	12%	2%
Installation	15%	9%	2%
Operation and Control	12%	9%	8%
Operation Monitoring	6%	6%	6%
Operations Analysis	3%	6%	24%
Programming	0%	3%	8%
Quality Control Analysis	3%	9%	6%
Repairing	15%	9%	0%
Technology Design	0%	6%	12%
Troubleshooting	12%	15%	14%

Note: Definitions for skill types and skills are available at http://online.onetcenter.org/skills/
Source: O*NET Online and Center for Business and Economic Research, The University of Alabama.

Education and Training Issues

Educational attainment in Mobile County is comparable to the state as a whole. Seventy-seven percent of residents age 25 and over have graduated from high school, compared to 75 percent for Alabama. Of that population, nearly 19 percent have bachelors or higher degree; 19 percent of Alabamians do. Skill and education requirements for jobs keep rising and emphasize a strong need to raise educational attainment in the county.

Table M.11 shows the number of selected occupations in the region for which a particular education/training category is most common. In general, high-earning occupations require high educational attainment levels, typically a bachelor's or higher degree. Several fast-growing jobs require postsecondary vocational training at the minimum. Most of the high-demand jobs require short-term to moderate on-the-job training.

Table M.11 Number of Selected Occupations with Most Common Education/Training Requirement

Most Common Education/Training Requirements Categories	Selected High-Demand Occupations	Selected Fast-Growing Occupations	Selected High-Earning Occupations
First Professional Degree	0	1	11
Doctoral Degree	0	0	3
Master's Degree	0	1	2
Work Experience Plus a Bachelor's or Higher Degree	1	5	11
Bachelor's Degree	3	4	20
Associate Degree	1	2	1
Postsecondary Vocational Training	2	2	1
Work Experience in a Related Occupation	2	1	0
Long-term On-the-job Training	3	2	0
Moderate On-the-job Training	6	6	1
Short-term On-the-job Training	16	9	0

Note: The last three education and training requirements categories are based on the length of time it generally takes an average worker to achieve proficiency for occupations in which postsecondary training is usually not needed for entry. **Long-term** requires more than 12 months on-the-job training that can include up to four years of apprenticeship, formal classroom instruction, and short-term employer-sponsored training. Trainees are generally considered to be employed in the occupation. **Moderate-term** requires one to 12 months on-the-job experience and informal training. **Short-term** requires up to one month on-the-job experience and training.

Source: O*NET Online; Center for Business and Economic Research, The University of Alabama; and Alabama Department of Industrial Relations.

The finding that basic skills are important for all the selected occupations (Table M.10) presents a challenge for workforce development in the county. It indicates a strong need for training in these skills. Ideally, all high school graduates should possess basic skills so that postsecondary and higher education can focus on other and more complex skill types while enhancing basic skills. Employers should be an integral part of planning for training as they can point out the skill needs of the future and any existing gaps.

High-earning occupations make up a small component of total employment and jobs offered by top employers in the region. Diversifying the county's economy would strengthen it. Economic development should also focus on retaining, expanding, and attracting industries that provide more high-earning jobs. Workforce development should pay attention to postsecondary and higher educational systems to ensure a ready and available workforce for these businesses. The higher

incomes to graduates of these institutions would help raise personal income for the county. Raising personal income by improving educational attainment and technological skills for a county that has low population and labor force growth rates is an effective economic development strategy.

A highly educated and productive workforce is a critical economic development asset. Together, workforce development and economic development can provide this asset and build a strong well-diversified county economy. Indeed, one cannot achieve success without the other.